Multi-year Defence Agreements

A Model for Modern Defence?

Clingendael Report

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Cover image: Wikimedia Commons/Staff Sgt. Samuel Rogers (U.S. Air Force).

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1 Introduction

Most European countries are struggling with their defence policies and the role of their armed forces. In the Netherlands, for instance, the defence establishment has been concerned for years that the defence budget is an easy target for the Ministry of Finance's balancing of the books and that a lack of support for defence policies creates inconsistencies in the political direction given to defence.[1] The bottom line is that defence policies should be consistent over a number of years, enjoying broad political and public support and that the armed forces receive sufficient funding during a reasonable time horizon in relation to what is demanded of them. In addition, multi-year consistency could also help to establish favourable conditions and incentives for defence cooperation across borders.[2] For this study we have looked into two examples of countries that have applied the method of a so-called '*Defence Agreement*'. Denmark and Sweden have set the example (although both in a somewhat different manner) to establish a multi-year consensus on defence, encompassing coalition and opposition parties and governments, based on all stakeholders, including experts. The goal of the resulting 'Defence Agreements' is to create stability and clarity for a number of years on the purpose of the armed forces and on defence planning. A 'Defence Agreement' would also transcend a change of government, because it involves as many political parties as possible.

To follow the examples of these two countries and create a national 'Defence Agreement' in another country would require that such an agreement is shaped to fit the specific political, legal and defence idiosyncrasies and traditions of that particular country. In a country with a more fragmented political landscape, finding consensus on defence is more difficult, but it is at the same time more necessary. There is not one blueprint for each country, but others could learn a great deal from what has been achieved in Denmark and Sweden. This study aims to provide a more in-depth discussion of the two models to be able to clarify what they entail (sections 2 and 3) and to look at the benefits and negative aspects of the models. What other countries can learn from the practices in Denmark and Sweden will be addressed in the concluding section in which the practice of 'Defence Agreements' is assessed and in which recommendations are formulated (sections 4 and 5). The study benefited from a number of interviews with both officials and academics from Denmark and Sweden and relies on open primary and secondary sources.

1 Tom Middendorp, *Wankel Draagvlak Krijgsmacht Maakt Ons Land Kwetsbaar*, Machiavelli lezing [Shaky Support for the Armed Forces Make Us Vulnerable], The Hague, 11 February 2015; *Manifest over de Versterking van de Nederlandse Defensie* [Manifest on Strengthening of Dutch Defence], 23 April 2015.

2 Angelien Eijsink, Spokesperson on Defence for the Dutch Labour Party, pioneered the idea of the Netherlands drawing lessons from the Danish and Swedish practices. See also: Angelien Eijsink, 'Parliamentary Dimensions of Defence Cooperation'. In: Margriet Drent, Dick Zandee, Lo Casteleijn, *Defence Cooperation in Clusters. Identifying the Next Steps*, Clingendael Report, October 2014, p. 32-34.

2 The case of Denmark

Political background

Danish politics are characterised by a consensual and consultative style of decision-making.[3] In addition, there is a high degree of consensus on the Danish role in international affairs, the purpose of defence and the role of the armed forces. The question is whether this is the result of the practice of 'Defence Agreements' or, vice versa, whether this practice is a consequence of the consensual character of Danish politics.

Denmark has a very homogeneous society: 89.6% of the population of 5.6 million are of Danish decent and 90% are protestant.[4] The homogeneity of Denmark is often cited as a reason for its political culture of consensus-seeking. An interviewee even called Denmark a 'tribe'. A remarkable feature of the country is that Denmark has consistently topped the well-being and happiness rankings of the EU's Eurobarometer since 1973. In addition, Denmark has consistently featured at the top of international lists of countries where the population's trust in the government has been the highest.[5] This is also reflected in the on average high turnout for general elections (generally around 86-88%). The politics of Denmark function within a framework of a parliamentary, representative democracy. The Kingdom of Denmark is a constitutional monarchy, in which the monarch, currently Queen Margrethe II, is head of state. Executive power is exercised by the Cabinet government (*regeringen*), presided over by the Prime Minister (*statsminister*) who is first among equals. Legislative power is vested in both the executive and the national Parliament (*Folketing*). The Judiciary is independent, officially appointed by the monarch and employed until retirement.

Denmark has a multi-party system, with two strong parties (the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) and the Liberals (Venstre)), and four or five other significant parties. No single party has held an absolute majority in the *Folketing* since 1909. Since only four post-war coalition governments have enjoyed a majority, government bills rarely become law without negotiations and compromise with both supporting and opposition parties. Hence the *Folketing* tends to be more powerful than legislatures in other EU countries. The Constitution does not grant the judiciary the power to judicially review legislation; however, the courts have asserted this power with the consent of the other branches of government. Since there are no constitutional or administrative courts, the Supreme Court deals with a constitutional dimension.

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3 John L. Campbell and Ove K. Pedersen, *Knowledge Regimes and the National Origin of Policy Ideas*, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 24-25.

4 The Official Website of Denmark, Facts and Statistics. Available at: http://denmark.dk/en/quick-facts/facts/ (accessed 19 August 2015).

5 Low ethnic diversity and Protestantism have often been mentioned as one of the reasons for high levels of social trust in countries. High levels of education and well-functioning state institutions are also causes of high levels of institutional and social trust. See: Kim Mannemar Soenderskov and Peter Thisted Dinesen, 'Danish Exceptionalism: Explaining the Unique Increase in Social Trust over the Past 30 Years'. In: *European Sociological Review*, 30 (2014) 6: 782-795.



Christiansborg palace, the seat of the Danish Parliament
(Photo: Flickr/Tina Monumentalia)

The parliamentary elections on 18 June 2015 led to the defeat of the centre-left minority government, with Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt resigning from the leadership of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The current Danish government of the Liberal Party (Venstre) now relies on the smallest amount of seats for decades. The Liberal Party leader and now the Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen only has 34 seats out of the 179 in the Danish Parliament.[6] His one-party government therefore needs at least 56 other parliamentarians' support in order to pass any legislation. Denmark has a history of minority coalition governments, but the Rasmussen government is relying on a particularly low amount of seats, even with the support of all the right-wing parties, the Liberals will have the slimmest of majorities in Parliament by just one vote.[7] The main election winner was the populist Danish People's Party (DPP), led by Kristian Thulesen Dahl. The DPP abandoned the efforts to form a right-wing coalition and opted to influence Danish politics from the opposition and to support the Liberals on a vote-by-vote basis.

In the Danish political culture, the government is inclined to engage with opposition parties through a continuing process of consultation and consensus-building. As in other policy areas, Denmark has a consultative style of decision-making on foreign and security policy. There has been a relative consensus on the direction and purpose of Danish defence policies since the Second World War. However, the 1980s form an exception when the Social Democratic Party challenged the government on its NATO policies and demanded a nuclear-free Scandinavia. The Danish government is obliged to consult Parliament on deploying troops abroad when it concerns operations involving the use of force beyond self-defence. The practice is that since the 1990s all major troop contributions have been submitted to a vote in Parliament, true to the strong norm of consultation and consensus. Except in 2003 for the Iraq deployment, where only a small majority was gained, in all other cases this has led to a clear majority of parliamentary support for troop deployments. There was even unanimous support for the deployment of six F-16 fighter jets in the Libya campaign in 2011, where it was one of the six NATO countries taking part in the air strikes.

6 Including 2 from Greenland and 2 from the Faroe Islands.
7 'Denmark Set for Liberal-led Government After Right-wing Coalition Talks Fail'. In: *The Guardian*, 19 June 2015.

Danish defence policies and strategic culture

Denmark is a highly interesting case for students of strategic culture. It has developed from a country with pacifist streaks in the 1980s to one with a propensity and the highest levels of public support for high-risk military missions. Denmark's strategic culture has gone through rapid changes, which is remarkable as in most understandings of strategic culture, it is either an unchangeable variable or a variable that is very difficult to change. Danish strategic culture during the Cold War was an ideal-driven security policy that was promoted through non-military means only. The military instrument was reserved for territorial defence only.

This has changed considerably. Denmark's military involvement in the Balkans in the 1990s was instrumental in altering the perception of the military as a legitimate tool of new, activist Danish foreign and security policy. The armed forces were considered "the flagship in Denmark's new activist foreign policy and military contributions to US-led NATO operations the norm."[8] 'Activism' can indeed be seen as the overriding hallmark of Danish strategic culture.[9] Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen considers this new-found consensus among Danish politicians, civil servants, officers and academics concerning what could be accomplished by using the Danish military to be the decisive factor in the emergence of a new strategic culture in Denmark. Another feature of this new strategic culture is that Denmark turned from mainstream atlanticism at the end of the Cold War to super atlanticist after 9/11.[10] "NATO is regarded as a top brand in Denmark", according to an interviewee in Copenhagen.

The Danish consensus does not only encompass consensus among the elite, but is also reflected in support from the population at large. The mission in Helmand in Afghanistan is an interesting illustration of high levels of support among the population for deployments of the Danish armed forces. Danish troops were deployed to Afghanistan in 2001, but the deployment to Helmand province, with a maximum strength of 250 in 2007, took place between 2006-2011. From 2011-2014 Denmark took on a training role. Denmark was among the countries that sustained the highest levels of casualties per capita in Afghanistan. Per capita, it ranked third only after the United States and the United Kingdom in 2012.[11] At the same time, support rates for the mission were still among the highest in comparison to other ISAF troop-contributing countries. In fact, Denmark maintained the second highest level of public support (49% from 2006-2009) after the United States. When public support for the Afghanistan mission plummeted in most countries, Danish support even rose to 72% in March 2012. In general, the armed forces as an institution enjoy levels of trust that are on average higher than those of other EU countries or higher than the trust in other institutions. Eurobarometer polls from 1997-2010 show levels of support of between 72%-83%, with exceptions in the years 2004 (67% after Iraq) and 2009 (62% after Georgia).[12]

8 Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For: How Public Support for the War was Maintained in the Face of Mounting Casualties and Elusive Success'. In: *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50 (2014) 2, p. 8.

9 Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'What is the Use of It? Danish Strategic Culture and the Utility of Armed Force'. In: *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40 (2005) 1, p. 68.

10 Hans Mouritzen, 'Denmark's Super Atlanticism'. In: *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 5 (2007) 2, p. 155-156.

11 In total there were 43 Danish fatalities, while nearly half of the Danish population continued to support the war. Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For', p. 2.

12 Eurobarometer 1997-2010, in response to the question: "For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or not to trust it: the army".



A Danish soldier in Helmand province, Afghanistan during the ISAF-mission
(Photo: Flickr/Resolute Support Media)

It is argued that Danish governments have been able to maintain this level of public support because successive Danish governments have continuously invested "in establishing and maintaining political and elite support for the operation."[13] Scholars argue that governments were so successful in generating this elite support because they appealed to widely shared national interests, ideas and role conceptions; in other words they forged a successful 'strategic narrative'.[14] In a comparison between public attitudes in Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain concerning public support for the ISAF mission in the face of casualties, Ringsmose and Børgesen argue that the difference between these countries is caused by the extent to which they have "strong and compelling strategic narratives".[15] Public support in Canada and the Netherlands dropped, while that in the United Kingdom and Denmark rose. The wider foreign policy elite in Denmark has consistently and continuously supported the strategic narrative that underpinned the purpose and goals of the Danes' considerable contribution to ISAF. Also in times of mounting Danish casualties, this strategic narrative of depicting the mission as a military defence of vital national and Western interests has been upheld. The major opposition parties continued to support the mission's principal objectives as well, with the exception of two smaller left-wing parties, the Socialist People's Party and the Red-Green Alliance.[16]

13 Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is Worth Dying For', p. 2.

14 See for instance: Beatrice de Graaf, George Dimitriu, Jens Ringsmose (eds.), *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War. Winning Public Support for the Afghan War*, London: Routledge, 2015.

15 Jens Ringsmose and Berit Kaja Børgesen, 'Shaping Public Attitudes towards the Deployment of Military Power: NATO, Afghanistan and the Use of Strategic Narratives'. In: *European Security*, 20 (2011) 4, p. 512.

16 Ibid., p. 522.

This strong and consistent narrative is very much helped by the practice of finding a cross-party consensus on defence through the negotiation of multi-annual Defence Agreements. Below, their nature, content and advantages are discussed.

Nature of Defence Agreements

Since 1988, Danish defence policies and defence budgets have been established through multi-year extra-parliamentary political agreements on defence. These multi-year political agreements are not only confined to defence policies in Denmark, but are also the practice in other political fields, such as, for example, tax reforms. Danish Defence Agreements (*Forsvarsforlig*) are published in roughly five-year cycles, while the more extensive Defence Commission Reports are written in times of strategic change (see table 1 for an overview). The latest Defence Agreement is for the period 2013-2017. In the summer of 2017 a new Defence Agreement will have to appear. These Agreements are not related to the coalition government cycle. The Defence Agreement that is in place will be honoured by any incoming government. For example, the current Agreement 2013-2017 has been retained although there have been general elections in June 2015 and a new government and a new Minister of Defence is in place. The Agreements are negotiated among all political parties represented in Parliament, both coalition and opposition parties, although mostly one or two parties decline to be a signatory to the Agreement. The 2000-2004 Defence Agreement was signed by six out of the eight parties in the *Folketing* (representing 80% of Parliament). For the 2010-2012 Defence Agreement, a party that had thus far not signed any Defence Agreement, the Socialist People's Party, wanted to demonstrate that it can be a responsible governing party (ahead of the 2011 general elections) and for the first time took part.

The current Danish Defence Agreement of 2013-2017 was concluded on 30 November 2012. It was signed by all the parties in the *Folketing*, except for the two parties on the left of the political spectrum, the Socialist People's Party and the Red-Green Alliance. The preceding Defence Agreement was supposed to have lasted from 2010-2014, but due to the winding down of the Afghanistan combat commitment, the need for savings and new security issues such as cyber threats and a new situation in the Arctic area, it was decided to draft a new Agreement. This indicates that although the five-year cycle is the norm, it is still up to the majority of Parliament to decide whether it is necessary to deviate from the normal schedule, if they feel circumstances compel them to do so. The 2013-2017 Agreement amounts to 29 pages and covers the future role of the Danish armed forces and the security policy framework, the level of ambition of the Danish armed forces and the overall financial framework.

The negotiations among the parties take place outside the parliament building and meetings to prepare the Defence Agreement are held at the Ministry of Defence. The text of a Defence Agreement is drawn up by civil servants from the Ministry of Defence which will then be discussed by the political parties. Neither the Danish Parliament nor the political parties have an extensive independent research capacity or the necessary number of support staff to be able to draft the text themselves. This denotes a relatively high level of influence by the Ministry of Defence on the contents of the Defence Agreements.

In the Danish case, different from the Swedish case, a Defence Agreement is a political agreement that is not eventually transformed into a bill, although it is translated into the defence budget. This means that the contents of Defence Agreements as such are not debated in Parliament. They remain extra-parliamentary documents that are available to

the public (they are published on the website of the Ministry of Defence), but not actively publicly discussed or defended by the parliamentarians who support them. Because the drafting of Defence Agreements is a delicate political process and takes place outside the public domain, this creates a lack of transparency towards the general public. The overall drive towards consensus indicates a highly influential Parliament and actively involving parties across coalition and opposition. However, an interviewee from Copenhagen commented that this means that discussions in Parliament on defence are only concerned with marginal issues, as the broader strokes have already been established in the Defence Agreement.

Formal reporting on the implementation of the Defence Agreement is extensive. In the 2013-2017 Defence Agreement it was agreed that there is a status meeting once a year where the annual reports of the armed forces and the home guard are presented to the defence and financial spokespersons of the parties to the Agreement. In addition to that, there is also a quarterly briefing on the progress on the main areas in the Agreement. The purpose of these meetings is to assess whether adjustments are necessary for the remainder of the period of the agreement. During the parliamentary year, representatives of the political parties that are signatories to the Defence Agreements are briefed at the Ministry of Defence in closed meetings once per month. This practice creates very well informed parliamentarians, but it does contain some risks for the oversight task of the legislature although law makers can still subsequently retain a critical attitude towards the Ministry of Defence's policies in Parliament.

Table 1 Danish Defence Agreements and Defence Commission Reports

Defence Agreements	Defence Commission Reports
2013-2017	
2010-2012	
2005-2009	2008
2000-2004	2003 (working group report)
1995-1999	1997
1993-1994	
1989-1991/2	1988

Defence Commission Reports

Danish Defence Agreements have to be differentiated from Reports of the Defence Commission, which are sometimes also referred to as White Papers. Whenever there is a major strategic change or when there is a major change in the Danish political landscape, a Defence Commission, which should be distinguished from the standing parliamentary Defence Committee, is formed. This is a practice that is shared with Sweden and Norway, entailing the appointment of a Commission to report in advance of far-reaching revisions of defence policy. Denmark has had nine Defence Commissions since the first was established in 1866 after the loss of the southern duchies in 1864. Defence Commissions were formed,

among others, after the First and Second World Wars. In recent times there have been Defence Commissions in 1988, 1997 and most recently in 2008.[17]

Defence Commissions consist of parliamentary spokespersons for Foreign Affairs and Defence, government officials, officers and external experts, such as academics and members of think tanks. The last Defence Commission of 2008-2009 was Chaired by the former Defence Minister, Hans Hækkerup. During his chairmanship he was Research Director at the Royal Danish Defence College. The actual writing process is taken up by civil servants from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The process of writing a Defence Commission Report takes about 18 months and is a relatively large investment in terms of time and resources. An exception was in 2003 when a smaller working group under the chairmanship of Hans Henrik Bruun, a former diplomat, presented a report in August 2003. This report reiterated the 1997 Defence Commission's conclusions that Denmark was not facing a territorial threat and the main recommendation was to specialise in delivering rapidly deployable initial-entry forces that could function alongside allied forces.[18]

The most recent Report from 2008 by the Danish Defence Commission, entitled 'Danish Defence. Global Engagement' amounts to 406 pages of which there is also an English language summary available.[19] The participants in the preparation of the Report were 29 members from political parties in Parliament as well as representatives from the Danish armed forces and various experts.[20] For this Report only one participant from the Red-Green Alliance wrote a minority statement, while there were six minority reports in the last Defence Commission's Report from 1997. On some issues, representatives from certain parties enter a reservation. For example, on the 2008 recommendation that it is not in the interest of Denmark to retain the EU defence opt-out, the Danish People's Party entered a reservation. The Report from 2008 is forward looking and outlines the expected tasks of the Danish armed forces up to 2025 on the basis of an extensive strategic assessment of the Danish security environment. The Defence Commission's Report concludes with a long list of recommendations covering subjects such as the future tasks of the Danish Armed Forces, international operations, the overall structure of the Armed Forces, the structure and capabilities of the Army, Air Force and Navy, and personnel and resources.

The Defence Commission Reports provide the basis for the five-yearly Defence Agreements. However, the government also produces annual security policy reviews, which are presented and debated in Parliament. Currently, the debate on security and defence policy in the *Folketing* is dominated by a number of issues: the possible shift in emphasis from crisis management to territorial defence and whether defence spending should increase. Since the Danish defence and security policies are largely laid down in Defence Agreements, there is currently no need to start a new Defence Commission Report process, although it has been seven years since the last report.

17 Danish Ministry of Defence, 'Danish Defence Commissions'. Available at: http://www.fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/DefencecommissionsinDenmark.aspx (accessed 18 August 2015).

18 Hans Henrik Bruun and others, *De Sikkerhedspolitiske Vilkaer for Dansk Forsvarspolitik*, Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 2003.

19 The Danish Defence Commission, 'Summary: Danish Defence Global Engagement' (Report by the Danish Defence Commission of 2008), March 2009.

20 Magnus Christiansson, 'Far Away, So Close: Comparing Danish and Swedish Defence and Security Policies'. In: *Militaert Tidsskrift*, 138 (2009) 3.

Content of Defence Agreements

The Danish Defence Agreement of 1995-1999 was signed on December 1995 and it further rationalised the structures of the Navy and Air Force by cutting the number of bases and reducing the number of Army Brigades from four to three. The 2000-2004 Danish Defence Agreement, concluded in May 1999, was based on the conclusions of the 1997 Defence Commission Report and continued to rapidly adapt the armed forces for expeditionary operations and underlined the willingness to use them.

The 2005-2009 Defence Agreement was negotiated in 2003-2004 and can be regarded as a turning point in the Danish transformation from a territorial defence-based force to an expeditionary force. In this Defence Agreement the concept of conscripted mobilisation was abandoned and Denmark fully committed itself to deployable capacities by doubling its ambition with regard to the number of Danish troops that can be continuously deployed. The Danish National Military Representative at SHAPE,[21] Brigadier General Jens Praestegaard, illustrated the impact of this Defence Agreement on force structure: "…we made a rather untraditional staffing up to that political defence agreement. Instead of looking at all our forces and capacities, we simply started from scratch by drawing a new structure asking ourselves what do we need to meet the political tasks. We transformed into a rather new system simply because we realized that from 2004 when this political agreement started our main effort would be on the international scene."[22]

Also part of the major decisions of this Defence Agreement is that for financial reasons it was agreed to scrap the submarine capability and ground-based air defence composed of Hawk missiles. Giving up the submarines had not been part of the recommendations of the 1997 Defence Commission Report, but to be able to have a broad majority for the 2005-2009 Defence Agreement a concession was made to the Social Democratic Party and the Social Liberal Party. In exchange, a third Patrol Ship was added to the original recommendation in the 1997 Report.

The current Defence Agreement of 2013-2017 emphasizes 'jointness' in further force restructuring: "...increased focus on the ability to plan and deploy across the capacities of the Danish army, navy and air force"[23]. Notable is that there are only a few lines of the Defence Agreement devoted to international or European defence cooperation. Under the heading 'multinationality' it is stated rather generically that "defence and home guard must actively pursue opportunities for a closer cooperation with other nations". There is no mainstreaming of international defence cooperation in other Chapters of the Defence Agreement's text. Concretely, only NATO's smart defence is mentioned and Denmark's re-entry into the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) project.[24] However, there is no further specification of which priorities are set here, nor which countries are preferred partners (although the Nordics are mentioned).

The extent of the depoliticisation process of security and defence in Denmark is also illustrated by the fact that the issue of the replacement of the F-16 fighter aircraft has hardly

21 Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe.

22 Website NATO Allied Command Operations, 'Denmark'. Available at: http://www.aco.nato.int/page12730928.aspx (accessed 12 August 2015).

23 Danish Defence Agreement 2013-2017, Copenhagen, 30 November 2012, p. 7.

24 Ibid., p. 18.

been touched upon in the Defence Commission Report of 2008 nor in the consecutive Defence Agreements of 2010-2012 and 2013-2017. The Defence Agreements do stipulate the approximate number of new fighter jets (bringing it down from 48 to 30) and the broad criteria on which selection should be based: "security policy (i.e., an assessment of the utility of fighters as a military asset), strategic issues, a military analysis, costs, and potential for Danish industry".[25] Most importantly, the Defence Agreement texts reflect the consensus that the Danish armed forces continue to need a combat aircraft capacity.[26] The acquisition of replacement aircraft has been delegated to a newly created office at the Ministry of Defence. As an interviewee in Copenhagen put it, "the issue has been de-politicised and handed to the experts". Denmark is a level-3 partner in the JSF programme and rebooted the selection process in 2010 after considerations that due to the financial crisis the timing of such a major purchase is "politically unattractive".[27] The selection process is planned to be concluded in the course of 2015.

Apart from the 'Defence Agreement' practice, the government also works with broadly carried multi-year strategies on, for instance, the Arctic, Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq to keep as many parties as possible on board concerning their policies. This entails a continuous consultation process, underpinned by the Defence Agreement text.

Conclusion: advantages and disadvantages of the Danish case

The advantages of a system of multi-year Defence Agreements in Denmark is clearly the stability, predictability and continuity it brings in terms of the available budget, the level of ambition and tasks of the armed forces and its force structure. The Ministry of Defence and the armed forces in Denmark therefore enjoy substantive planning stability over a number of years. The continuous process of keeping all or most political parties on board also means that continuity is not only linked to Defence Agreement documents, but that the whole political elite are broadly in agreement on the long-term direction of Denmark's security and defence policies. Defence Agreements are in that sense a tool in codifying and achieving that stable consensus. Although it is difficult to show the causal connection between elite consensus and high levels of popular trust in the armed forces and support for their deployments, it has to be noted that since the end of the 1980s there is steady support for the activist defence policy of Denmark among the population. There does not seem to be much political infighting on the issue and defence and security seem to be almost 'depoliticised'.

The remarkable consensus on security and defence policies across most of the political parties brings many advantages, but also has its downside. Because of the broad elite consensus it is very difficult for differing opinions within the population to be able to obtain a 'vehicle' for being voiced.

In the Danish system of Defence Commissions and Defence Agreements, parliamentarians are at the centre of and are actively involved in deciding on the purpose and composition of the Danish armed forces. This brings the responsibility of being more involved, knowledgeable and better informed than in a system in which parliamentarians are more

25 Jens Ringsmose, 'Investing in Fighter-Jets and Alliances: Norway, Denmark and the Bumpy Road to the Joint Strike Fighter'. In: *International Journal*, 68 (2012/2013) 1, p. 98.

26 Danish Defence Agreement 2013-2017, p. 11.

27 Ringsmose, 'Investing in Fighter-Jets and Alliances', p. 98.

passively overseeing what Ministers of Defence are presenting to them. Because the Danish model is based on Defence Agreements that are political, extra-parliamentary and negotiated among political parties, they do not come with the same transparency and possibilities for checks and balances as official bills would have. In the Danish context, where these political agreements play a role in almost all policy fields, this is part of a balanced democratic system where the lines between the executive and the legislative branches are somewhat more blurred than in other democratic systems, without losing its legitimacy. It is nevertheless a side-effect of these types of political agreements that more transparency towards the general public is asked for and there is a realisation that democratic accountability relies on a differentiation in roles and responsibilities between the executive and the legislature. The less frequent and more thorough Defence Commissions have a more diverse membership composition. As they play an important role in the analysis of the Danish security challenges, the Danish response to that, and form the basis for the Defence Agreements, they somewhat mitigate the lack of transparency.

It is remarkable to note how little space Danish Defence Agreements dedicate to international defence cooperation. There is hardly any external orientation apart from a cursory mention of commitments to NATO, the UN and the Nordic countries. This is surprising considering Denmark's clear international outlook and cooperation within NATO and the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO). The Agreements are clearly directed at a national audience, which is a missed opportunity as the Danish Defence Agreements are a very good source of information for potential partner countries and could very well serve as an external communication tool. In addition, there are all kinds of opportunities for the harmonisation of planning with partner countries.

The Danish practice is very much embedded in the consensus-seeking political culture and might be difficult to replicate in another political context. For instance, in 2000 an attempt was made by Norway to adopt the Danish system of broad, long-term Defence Agreements. However, it proved very difficult to reach such a broad-based settlement in the Norwegian political context.[28] The high levels of trust, the consensus-seeking reflex in a political system that is used to functioning with minority governments and the bargaining that comes along with that is very specific for Denmark. Also, the extent of the detail in the Danish Defence Agreements in terms of force structure, capabilities, personnel and budgetary stipulations will be difficult to attain in a more polarised political landscape in which political parties generally aim to enhance their political profile at the expense of common ground.

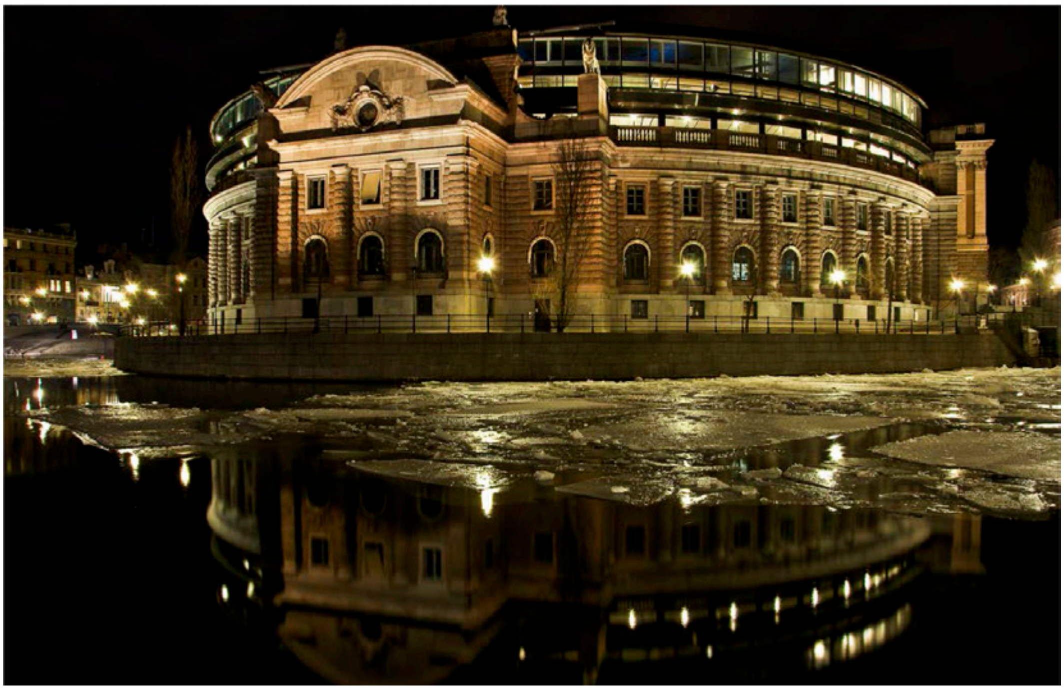
'Defence Agreements' can survive significant changes in the international security environment. So far, the deteriorating security environment has not given any reason to draft a new Agreement, although the date of signature of the latest Defence Agreement (November 2012) predates most of the latest threats.

28 Haekon Lunde Saxi, 'Norwegian and Danish Defence Policy. A Comparative Study of the Post-Cold War Era'. In: *Defence and Security Studies*, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, (2010) 1, p. 44.

3 The case of Sweden

Political background

Sweden is a parliamentary representative democracy; its legislative branch lies with the unicameral '*Riksdag*' with 349 members. Elections are held every four years, and a government is formed fairly quickly afterwards. The current political landscape is characterised by bloc politics, with a centre-left and a centre-right bloc, with the Sweden Democrats (a nationalist party) holding the balance of power. After the last election in September 2014, the Social Democrats and the Greens formed a minority government. While the Sweden Democrats doubled their support, they have remained isolated as the other parties have repeatedly stated that they are not willing to cooperate with them.



Riksdaghuset, the seat of the Swedish parliament
(Photo: Flickr/Matteo Catanese)

One of the main features that is often attributed to the Swedish way of policy-making is its consensual nature. There is a strong tradition of getting all parties on board and, to that end, there are several procedures to come to a collective decision. For example, another peculiarity of Swedish policy-making in comparison with other parliamentary democracies is the system of (inquiry) commissions. These commissions are appointed by the government and prepare major policy decisions in various policy areas.

This practice of having commissions preparing major policy decisions is particularly well developed with regard to Swedish defence policy. Up to the 1990s the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces presented a report on the military needs for the forthcoming five years,

which was the basis for a discussion in a Defence Commission. Because of the failure of the Defence Commission in 1990, due to the fact that they did not anticipate the reunification of Germany, and because of a severe economic crisis, the system was adapted and the government used a small group of parliamentarians to consult on their upcoming defence bill. Since 1994, the Defence Commission has been upgraded again, and it produced a security and defence report that formed the basis of the Government's defence policy bill.[29] The most recent Defence Commission published its security policy report in May 2013, and finalised its work with the presentation of a defence policy report in May 2014. Both documents have formed the basis for a new defence bill covering the years 2016 to 2020 that has been proposed by the government to Parliament in April 2015, but which has still to be voted upon at the time of writing.

Swedish defence policies and strategic culture

The strategic culture of Sweden has been shaped by several factors, such as its geographical location and hence its proximity to Russia, and the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the Swedish doctrine was summarised as "non-aligned in peacetime, aiming for neutrality in case of war". This doctrine had fostered a mind-set of self-reliance with regard to national security that in turn resulted in a large conventional military defence.[30] Defence spending was therefore relatively high: for a long time it was slightly under 3% of national GDP.[31] Two notions characterised Sweden at the time. In the first place it emphasised professional and technologically advanced military forces. In addition, it strongly adhered to the notion of a people's army based on conscription.[32]

Swedish security and defence policy has changed fundamentally over the last couple of years. From a strong focus on national territorial defence, the focus has shifted to participation in international crisis-management missions. Sweden actively promoted international peacekeeping and advocated a strong role for the UN. Sweden has participated in a number of UN, EU or NATO-led military missions, such as in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Congo, Mali and Libya. This increased involvement can be seen as "the beginning of a new era in Sweden's military engagement in international coalitions operations".[33] In addition, international and regional security cooperation is now seen as crucial, despite the doctrine of non-alignment. It has been a strong advocate of closer European cooperation and it has enhanced its military cooperation with the Nordic countries and NATO. Sweden has recently sought even deeper bilateral cooperation with Finland. One of the most remarkable changes in Swedish security and defence policy is the declaration of solidarity. The defence bill of 2009 states that "Sweden's security is built in solidarity and cooperation with other countries".[34] The last Defence Commission of 2014 has re-emphasised this declaration of solidarity: "Sweden will

29 Jörg E. Noll, 'Leadership and Institutional Reform in Consensual Democracies: Dutch and Swedish Organizations after the Cold War' (Phd. Dissertation), University of Leiden (2005), p. 145-147.

30 Robert Dalsjö, 'From self-sufficiency to solidarity: The Transformation of Sweden's Defence and Security Policies'. In: *Strategic Management of Military Capabilities: Seeking Ways to Foster Military Innovation* (proceedings International symposium on Security Affairs 2012), October 26, 2012.

31 SIPRI, Military Expenditure Database (accessed 13 April 2015).

32 Gunnar Åselius, 'Swedish Strategic Culture after 1945'. In: *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40 (2005) 1.

33 Franz Kernic, 'Expeditionary Capabilities and the Use of Force in a Post-Interventionist Era: The Case of Sweden'. In: G Kümmel and B. Giegerich (eds.), *The Armed Forces: Towards a Post-Interventionist Era?*, Potsdam: Spinger, 2013, p. 168.

34 Swedish government, 'A Functional Defence', DS 2008/09: 140, Stockholm, 19 March 2009.

not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to take similar action if Sweden is affected. Sweden must therefore be able to give and receive civilian and military support".[35]

Swedish defence expenditure has declined substantially during the last decades. Nowadays the defence budget only accounts for 1.1% of national GDP.[36] This strong decline in expenditure has significantly affected the state of the armed forces. The Supreme Commander warned in an interview in 2012 that in the event of a minor attack from an external aggressor, the Swedish armed forces would only be able to defend Sweden for no more than a week. This has spurred a heated debate about the poor state of the armed forces and more generally about Swedish defence policy. Taking into consideration the changed security context – with Russia acting more aggressively close to its borders – national defence is back on the agenda.[37]

Public support for the military is quite high, and has risen in the last few years. A recent publication by one of the two major polling institutions on defence issues in Sweden, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agencies, showed that more than 60 percent of the Swedish population supported both having strong armed forces and military operations abroad.[38] Another recurrent question is whether the budget of the Swedish armed forces should be increased or not. For a long time, a large part of the Swedish population thought that it should remain the same (40%) or should even be lowered (20%). The turning point came around 2008 as a larger part of the population started to believe that an increased budget for the military was necessary. In 2014, 57% of Swedish people believed that government expenditure for defence should be increased.[39]

Nature of 'Defence Agreements'

The Swedish Defence Commission (*Försvarsberedningen*) has thus been created for consultation on security and defence policy between Member of Parliament and the government, and serves as an important tool to reach broad consensus. It is a practice that is based on a long tradition; it is not a codified procedure. The Defence Commission is appointed every four to five years, usually after general elections are held. While it needs to be approved by the government, the Ministry of Defence in principle decides upon the composition of the Commission, its mandate and the exact tasking, and practical issues like budget and a time-frame. The Defence Commission consists of Members of Parliament, both from coalition and from opposition parties, but should not be confused with the standing parliamentary committee on defence. The political parties in the *Riksdag* are asked to nominate a representative for the Defence Commission, who is often, but not necessarily, the same MP who is also a member of the standing committee on defence. The chair of the Defence Commission is always from the largest party in government. The Ministry of Defence has the final say on the appointment of the members, but usually follows the suggestions

35 Swedish Defence Commission, 'Choices in a Globalised World', DS 2013: 33, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, Defence Commission, 31 May 2013. English summary available at: http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/18638/a/240432.

36 Worldbank, Military Expenditure Database (accessed 13 April 2015).

37 Christian Nünlist, 'The Struggle for Sweden's defence policy', Zurich: Center for Security Studies, May 2013.

38 Thomas Gell and Ingela Stenbäck, 'Opinioner 2014 - Allmänhetens syn på samhällsskydd, beredskap, säkerhetspolitik och försvar', MSB - Swedish Civil Contingencies Agencies, 11 January 2015, p. 63.

39 Ibid., p. 88-89.

made by the parties. In addition to the parliamentarians, experts from various government offices take part in the Defence Commission, among which are representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, the armed forces and the Civil Contingency Agency.

Generally, the Defence Commission adopts a two-step procedure that takes around 18 months to complete. It starts with drafting a security policy report, in which an analysis is provided of the challenges and threats of the security environment. When this report is finalised, it is followed by a defence policy report that answers the question of how to deal with the security situation that is outlined in the security report. During the writing of both reports, the members of the Defence Commission regularly consult both Swedish and international experts and researchers, and are briefed by organisations such as the Swedish Defence Research Agency or the Swedish Institute for International Affairs. They can also request scientific and policy reports from these institutions on specific topics. In addition, the Defence Commission conducts various study trips to several countries to learn from their experiences.

The Ministry of Defence supports the Defence Commission and also delivers the members of the secretariat that prepares meetings, coordinates research activities etc. This secretariat is headed by a secretary general, who has a central role in the writing process. In the preparation of the work in the Defence Commission, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence provide informal working papers that form a starting point for the discussions. Upon request, the ministries can also provide background material during the writing process.

Table 2 Swedish Security Policy Reports and Defence Policy Reports

Security Policy Reports	Defence Policy Reports
May 2013 – *Vägval i en globaliserad värld* [Choices in a Globalised World]	May 2014: *Försvaret av Sverige. Starkare försvar för en osäker tid* [The Defence of Sweden. Stronger Defence for Uncertain Times]
December 2007: *Säkerhet i samverkan* [Security in Cooperation]	June 2008: *Försvar i användning* [Defence in Use]
February 2003: *Säkrare grannskap – osäker värld* [A More Secure Neighbourhood, Insecure World]	June 2004: *Försvar för en ny tid* [Defence for a New Time] June 2003: *Vårt militära försvar – vilja och vägval* [Our Military Defence – Commitment and Choices]
March 2001: *Gränsöverskridande sårbarhet – gemensam säkerhet* [Cross-border Vulnerability – Common Security]	August 2001: *Ny struktur för ökad säkerhet – nätverksförsvar och krishantering* [A New Structure for Enhanced Security – Network Defence and Crisis Management]
February 1998: *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i ny omvärldsbelysning* [Swedish Security Policy in the Light of International Change]	September 1999: *Europas Säkerhet-Sveriges Försvar* [European Security – Sweden's Defence] January 1999: *Förändrad omvärld – omdanat försvar* [A Changing World – A Reformed Defence]
September 1996: Omvärldsäförändring och svensk säkerhetspolitik [Global Change and Swedish Security Policy] May 1995: Sverige I Europa och världen [Sweden in Europe and the World]	 September 1995: totalförsvarets utveckling och förnyelse [Total Renewal of Defence]

Content of 'Defence Agreements'

As said, in the security policy report the Defence Commission lays out its broad view of the security environment. In the last report of May 2013, "Choices in a Globalised World", not surprisingly, a great deal of attention was given to Russia's actions. The Commission recognised that the security environment had changed and stated, "The policies pursued by Russia, (…) are unpredictable and destabilising" and "significantly weaken the European security order".[40] While a direct military attack was deemed unlikely, this identified threat was a breakaway from the perceived absence of conventional threats. Indeed, this threat assessment differed significantly compared to the former security report of 2007. That report, called "Security in Cooperation", was much more about transnational threats, and underscored particularly the threat of climate change: "Environmental impact and climate change represent the most serious global threats to people's security".[41] Now there is much more focus on national defence, although in a regional perspective.

The defence reports are based upon the context that is given in the security report. Those reports usually contain specific proposals with regard to the armed forces in terms of organisation, budget and staffing. In the defence policy report from 2008, "Defence in Use", the Defence Commission proposed a new basis and structure for the armed forces to reflect the ambitions of being more flexible and usable.[42] This included a modernisation of personnel provision (voluntary recruitment instead of conscription), a transition from heavier to lighter combat units, a division between permanent and contracted units and better financial management of the armed forces. Furthermore, it proposed measures to improve civil-military cooperation, and far-reaching collaboration in the Baltic Sea area. The most recent defence report ("The Defence of Sweden: Stronger Defence for Uncertain Times") of 2014 was equally rather specific.[43] The Defence Commission stressed that the "single most important" priority for the coming defence period is to strengthen the operational capability of all units to ensure overall operational capability. It has prioritised Stockholm and Gotland island as two strategic areas, and proposed to strengthen naval presence in the Baltic Sea. The Defence Commission also proposed to increase the number of JAS 39E aircraft (from the already approved 60 to 70), to enlarge the submarine fleet from four to five submarines and it recommended the acquisition of high-precision cruise missiles. With regard to the structure of the armed forces, it suggested an analysis of the possibility of organising the army's combat forces into brigades (instead of battalions). Furthermore, the Defence Commission is also rather specific about the required budget in order to realise its proposals. It has proposed to strengthen the budget on a yearly basis by 600 million euros (5.5 billion Swedish Crowns) in the next defence period (2014-2020). In addition, an increase of at least 110 million euros (1 billion Swedish Crowns) should already be in place in 2017. A question that remains open for debate, however, is where the money has to come from, and this will be dealt with later in the process.

40 Swedish Defence Commission, 'Choices in a Globalised World'.

41 Swedish Defence Commission, 'Security in Cooperation', DS 2007: 46, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, Defence Commission, 4 December 2007. English summary available at: http://www.government.se/sb/d/8182/nocache/true/a/93944/dictionary/true.

42 Swedish Defence Commission, 'Defence in use', DS 2008: 48. Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, Defence Commission, 13 June 2008.

43 Swedish Defence Commission, 'The Defence of Sweden. Stronger Defence for Uncertain Times', DS 2014: 20, Stockholm: Ministry of Defence, Defence Commission, May 2014.



TP 84 Hercules performing inflight refuelling of 2 Swedish JAS 39E Gripens
(Photo: Wikimedia Commons/Milan Nykodym)

In both the security as well as the defence policy reports, ample attention has been given to the importance of strengthening bilateral and multilateral defence and security cooperation. It advocates a strong role for the European Union and wants to continue to develop cooperation with NATO as well, in the form of a differentiated partnership. In addition, it wants to seek closer cooperation with the Nordic countries, as well as with the Baltic countries, Poland and Germany. None of the two reports indicate specific cooperation possibilities with partners.

Implementation of 'Defence Agreements'

When the security and defence reports are finalised, these are handed to the government. A public consultation period of usually three months follows, in which the public, lobby groups, industry etc. are given the opportunity to comment on the reports. Afterwards, the reports are sent back to the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry will task the armed forces and other defence authorities to provide their analysis on the feasibility of the reports; as a result the armed forces will provide the Ministry of Defence with their recommendations. The Ministry of Defence translates these recommendations and the reports as directly as possible into a proposal for a defence bill. This proposal will be debated in the Standing Committee of Defence (and partly in the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs), and will finally be put to a vote in Parliament. When the bill is approved, this serves, in a way, as the Swedish Defence White Paper.

The main difficulty in this process is the allocation of the budget. While the Defence Commission has provided a certain direction, it has not specified where the budget has to come from, so this has to be debated within the government offices and, in turn, with the parties. Recent debate on the defence budget has been rather sharp, but has resulted in an

historical increase. While the Liberals left the negotiations on the defence bill, as they wanted to increase the budget even higher, there is general consensus about the necessity of these measures. In the new defence bill, that has yet to be approved by Parliament, the government proposed (for the first time in more than two decades) to increase defence spending over the next five years by 11% (2.2% per year). On the specific capabilities requested, however, there is more controversy, as it seems that the large defence industry in Sweden seems to have quite a substantial influence. A key priority that has been set in the new defence bill is to enhance the war-fighting capability of the Swedish armed forces.

The success of a Defence Commission, in terms of sustaining political support during the negotiations, very much depends on the representatives in the Commission. In recent years, more heavyweight politicians have been participating in the Defence Commission, who are more influential in their own party. In order to sustain the high level of consensus during the negotiation process, the Ministry of Defence is in continuous dialogue with the representatives of the political parties (or even has talks on party-leader level). The debate on the recent defence bill from 2009 showed that sustained support is not provided, despite the agreement that was made beforehand in the form of the defence report. The Social Democrats withdrew their support for the bill at the very end because they did not agree with the abolition of conscription. In the recent process of drafting the defence bill, the two main issues that were on the table are NATO membership and the required budget. The centre-right opposition previously made an inquiry into possible NATO membership as a hard precondition for their support for the upcoming bill. In the end, only the Liberal Party left the negotiations as they did not agree with the budget proposal made by the government.

The entire process, from appointing a Defence Commission to the final approval of a defence bill, takes a few years. In the case of major changes in the security situation, the system is rather flexible, however. The last Defence Commission, for example, was given an extension to complete its report so as to also include the recent developments in Ukraine. If the Defence Commission is no longer in office, the Ministry of Defence can also update the security assessments made.

Conclusion: advantages and disadvantages of the Swedish case

What has been viewed as one of the main advantages of the Swedish way of making defence policy is the way in which broad consensus is achieved, both in the political as well as in the public arena. The Defence Commission serves a much broader purpose than just preparing the defence bill; it also aims to inform and educate parliamentarians in order to create a common level of knowledge. It generates a broad understanding and builds a high level of trust between the parliamentary parties. There would probably not be such a far-reaching agreement on defence if the Defence Commission would not have done the preparatory work. Trust is also built between the different government offices during the writing of the reports, as they learn to understand each other's positions and agendas. Also in terms of public support, the system has served Sweden quite well, as the armed forces and the Ministry of Defence are both forced to really engage in public debate to legitimise the need for having a strong defence. Although it is again difficult to establish a clear causal link, this seems to have contributed to broad public support for the Swedish armed forces.

Although the allocation of the budget remains a difficult issue, the Defence Commission provides a clear direction that is not easily neglected in the process of drafting the defence bill. The fact that the defence reports form the basis for a multi-year defence bill is beneficial

for defence planning in terms of predictability and stability, as it gives a long-term perspective for the sector. This benefit is valued much higher than the limitations, such as being less flexible in defence planning. This, in turn, also works positively for cooperation with third countries. Not only the fact that there is a long-term plan, but also the process itself helps to engage in a purposeful dialogue with third countries on defence cooperation.

However, from a democratic point of view there are a few concerns. One point of criticism relates to the relationship between the government and Parliament. The whole process is in fact taken out of the normal parliamentary procedures, the deliberations of the Defence Commission are not open to the public, nor are there any transcripts of the proceedings. There is thus little transparency concerning what happens during the process and so the democratic level has been questioned, both in Parliament as we as in public debates. The Defence Commission does recognise this, and tries to improve the level of transparency by, for example, introducing public hearings. More as a matter of principle, one can question the inclusiveness of the Defence Commission, in the way it incorporates both opposition and coalition in one single commission. While the members retain their right to have and publish dissenting voices, it is still a question whether the opposition is not co-opted into a consensus on defence and is silenced in its oppositional role.

Another concern relates to the rather central role of the Ministry of Defence. By delivering the members of the secretariat of the Defence Commission, that is responsible for most of the actual writing, this Ministry has quite a firm grip on the process. This is the case for both the security policy report and the defence policy report. In this way, the Ministry of Defence has a significant influence on security policy as well, which is of course actually the field of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4 Conclusion: Assessing the practice of 'Defence Agreements'

The Danish and Swedish cases of 'Defence Agreements' are similar in many ways, but also show important differences. Denmark distinguishes between the Defence Commission that prepares a Report that is comparable to a White Paper, on the one hand, and the political agreement between coalition and opposition parties, the actual 'Defence Agreements', on the other. Defence Commissions are only created in case of major strategic changes, in practice only once in approximately ten years, while the Defence Agreements are concluded in a five-year cycle and are the basis of defence policies and are translated into the budget. In Sweden, a six-year cycle of Defence Commissions prepare security policy and defence policy reports which are then formalised in a Defence Bill by the government. Both cases have in common that a multi-year consensus on defence is created, across coalition and opposition parties. The Swedish practice is more regulated by law and embedded in the formal parliamentary process. For countries that have a less consensual political culture, the Swedish case could therefore probably be better emulated than that of the Danes. However, both cases have a lot to offer, and if countries are looking for inspiration to the Danes and the Swedes, it is better not to 'copy-paste', but to keep in mind the advantages that 'Defence Agreements' offer and to adapt the practice to their political circumstances.

From both the Swedish and Danish cases, it is clear that the practice of 'Defence Agreements' provide interesting lessons-learned for other countries as 'Defence Agreements' have the potential to:

- create a common understanding on defence across multiple national stakeholders encompassing the legislature, the executive, experts and interest groups;
- turn parliamentarians into producers of ideas about defence, policy and strategy instead of consumers;
- increase the awareness of parliamentarians about the relation between security challenges, the level of ambition and the budget which is allocated for this purpose;
- contribute to the creation of a strategic narrative about the purpose and meaning of defence policies and the armed forces;
- generate more public acceptance and support for defence and defence spending, subject to the condition that the process is sufficiently inclusive and transparent;
- ring-fence multi-year budget allocations for defence, thereby ensuring stability and continuity in the defence organisation;
- establish a more stable horizon on multi-year defence planning, also allowing the alignment of defence and procurement planning, their procedures and decision-making cycles with international partners in defence cooperation;
- facilitate longer-term stability and predictability needed for successful international defence cooperation, both in the alignment of procurement planning, cooperation on maintenance, training, education, exercises, up to and including the operational phase;
- raise the threshold for turning back on international defence cooperation.

Drafting a multi-year 'Defence Agreement' would entail a certain *de-politicisation* of policy-making on defence. It has to be acknowledged that these types of agreements cut through the traditional division of roles between the government and Parliament, which means that care has to be taken that the desired checks and balances remain intact and that it remains clear where responsibilities lie, most of all in cases of acting on conflicts and crises.

One of the added values of 'Defence Agreements' is that it can make defence cooperation with other countries easier. There are numerous factors that contribute to successful defence cooperation; trustworthiness, predictability and a multi-year outlook on purpose, plans and available budgets are important elements of that success. These elements are part of the practice of 'Defence Agreements'. This added value would be diminished if national 'Defence Agreements' were made in isolation, not taking clusters of cooperation or the collective requirements of the EU and NATO into account. The international defence cooperation aspect of 'Defence Agreements' can be improved by including representatives of strategic partners among the stakeholders negotiating the agreement. In addition, consultations should take place with multilateral organisations such as EU/EDA and NATO at an early stage of the drafting process.

5 Recommendations

- The practice of 'Defence Agreements' in Denmark and Sweden show clear advantages and it is worthwhile to further explore to what extent (elements of) the practice can be adopted in other countries;

- Because of the more formalised practice of 'Defence Agreements' in Sweden, the Swedish type can be better reproduced elsewhere as it relies somewhat less on the very particular strategic culture of consensus-seeking as is seen in Denmark;

- The practice of 'Defence Agreements' to a certain extent cuts through the traditional division between the responsibilities of the executive and the legislature, which means that a new type of checks and balances has to be found;

- In implementing 'Defence Agreement' processes, it should be avoided that Parliament needs to lean exclusively on expertise from the Ministries: to support the independent oversight function of parliaments a sufficient independent parliamentary research capacity has to be created;

- Defence Agreement processes should be as transparent as possible for other stakeholders and the general public, for example through a public consultation process, generating transcripts and involving the academic and think-tank community;

- At the early stages of drafting 'Defence Agreements' strategic partners and the EU and NATO should be consulted to optimise the potential for harmonised planning and international defence cooperation;

- 'Defence Agreements' should also pay attention to various scenarios in which rapid response formations (multilateral ones, such as the EU Battlegroups or the NRF/VJTF; or multinational ones, such as the Joint Expeditionary Force) could be deployed, thereby contributing to rapid decision-making and trustworthiness towards partners;

- While retaining the clear advantages of the stability, predictability and continuity of multi-year agreements, sufficient flexibility needs to be built into the process to account for possible significant changes in circumstances;

- The strategic assessment underpinning the security and defence policies should take the internal and external dimension of security threats into account, cutting through various sectors of government.